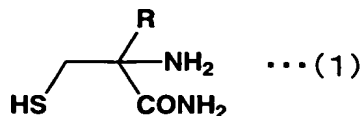


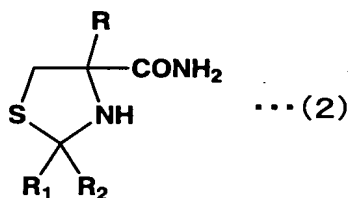
CLAIMS

1. A 2-alkylcysteinamide represented by the general formula (1) or a salt thereof:

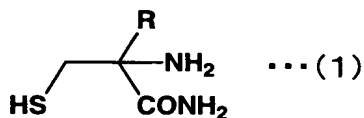


5 wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

2. A process for producing a 2-alkylcysteinamide or a salt thereof through a hydrolysis of a 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide represented by the general formula (2) or a salt thereof:



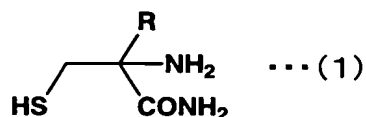
wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms; and each of R<sub>1</sub> and R<sub>2</sub> independently represents hydrogen or a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms, or R<sub>1</sub> and R<sub>2</sub> are linked together to form an alicyclic structure having 4-7 carbon atoms, excluding the case where both R<sub>1</sub> and R<sub>2</sub> are hydrogen, to give a 2-alkylcysteinamide represented by the general formula (1) or a salt thereof



wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

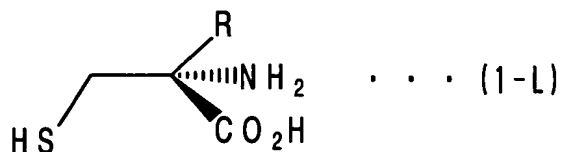
3. The process for producing a 2-alkylcysteinamide or a salt thereof according to claim 2, wherein an aqueous solution of a 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide or a salt thereof is used as the 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide represented by the general formula (2) or a salt thereof.

4. A process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine, which is characterized in that it comprises allowing cells of a microorganism or a treated product thereof having an activity of stereoselectively hydrolyzing a 2-alkyl-L-cysteinamide to act on a 2-alkyl-L-cysteinamide represented by the general formula (1),



wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms,

to produce a 2-alkyl-L-cysteine represented by the general formula (1-L):



wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

5. The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to claim 4, wherein the microorganism having an activity of stereoselective hydrolysis of a 2-alkyl-L-cysteinamide is a bacterium  
5 which belongs to the genus Protaminobacter, the genus Mycoplana, or the genus Xanthobacter.

6. The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to claim 4 or 5, wherein the  
10 stereoselective hydrolysis by the action of cells of a microorganism and/or a treated product thereof is carried out under inert gas flow and/or in a coexistence of a reducing agent.

15 7. The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein R represents methyl in the general formulas (1) and (1-L).